

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 457 158

SP 040 262

AUTHOR Aldrich, Jennifer E.
TITLE Professional Development Schools: Listening to Teachers' and Teacher Candidates' Voices.
PUB DATE 2001-08-08
NOTE 12p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association of Teacher Educators (Portland, OR, August 8, 2001).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *College School Cooperation; Elementary Education; Focus Groups; Higher Education; *Partnerships in Education; Preservice Teacher Education; *Professional Development Schools; *Student Teacher Attitudes

ABSTRACT

This paper describes data from focus groups conducted with elementary teacher mentors at two Professional Development School (PDS) sites. The focus group sessions emphasized four themes: teachers' decisions to get involved in a PDS, teachers' perceived barriers to PDS success, how teachers benefit from PDSs, and recommendations for improvement. Teachers decided to become involved in the PDS for such reasons as: needing help, being mandated by the principal, and believing that children would benefit from the effort. Participants listed many benefits for students, teachers, preservice teachers, parents, and principals, including: lower teacher-student ratios, a positive approach to working out problems, and sharing the needs of students. Respondents named several barriers that inhibited collaboration and inquiry, including: lack of information about the extensiveness of the projects, time factors, and student teachers' skill levels. Some of their recommendations included: remind new mentor teachers of goals for the student teachers, have student teachers participate in lunchroom and playground duties, and describe boundaries to student teachers. Teachers stated that the PDS had met their expectations and they looked forward to participating again. Student teachers also made positive comments about their PDS experiences. (Contains 21 references.) (SM)

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND
DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS
BEEN GRANTED BY

Jennifer E. Aldrich

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

- This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
- Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
- Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Professional Development Schools:

Listening to Teachers' and Teacher Candidates' Voices

Jennifer E. Aldrich

Central Missouri State University

Paper presented at the ATE Summer Conference

Portland, Oregon

August 8, 2001

2

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

**Professional Development Schools:
Listening to Teachers' and Teacher Candidates' Voices**

Early Childhood Educators recognize the importance of early and on-going field experiences for teacher candidates (Baker, 1996; Marshall, 1999), therefore, a partnership was forged between a large metropolitan university in Texas and two suburban elementary schools to provide university students experiences with students in the school setting.

Although the PDS provided many positive experiences for all stakeholders (principals, teachers, students, teacher candidates' and parents), there was a strong desire to enhance the experience for all involved. Consequently, focus groups were conducted with teachers at each elementary school to obtain their perceptions and teacher candidates conveyed their perceptions through class discussion and email messages. The focus of this paper is to introduce a brief history of professional development schools and report the results of an action research project conducted after one year of university and school collaboration. The qualitative research was aimed at improving and sustaining two early childhood professional development schools (PDS).

Many people believe that well prepared teachers are the best hope for school reform. Teacher education is an important component of education reform since better prepared teachers result in higher student learning. Therefore, calls for reform in education have exerted pressure to change the system of educating teachers (Association of Teacher Educators, 1986; Cobb, 2001; Goodlad, 1990; Ishler, 1995). The Holmes Group (1986, 1990) and the Carnegie Forum (1986) emphasized that to prepare students for the future, schools, teachers, principals, and colleges of education must change to accommodate

technology and the diversity of the American citizenry. Consequently, professional development schools have been espoused as a remedy for the problems with teacher education (Goodlad, 1990; Marshall, 1999).

The professional development school has its roots from several similar models since the late nineteenth century. Laboratory schools, portal schools, clinical schools, and induction schools are four examples of programs to improve teacher education. First John Dewey established the first Laboratory School at the University of Chicago around the turn of the century. This lab school was aimed at research activities that would improve teaching and give experience to students preparing to teach. The laboratory schools peaked in 1964 and the numbers have dwindled in recent years. Second, the portal school was first described in literature in 1969 as a point of entry of new curriculum and practices to improve learning for students (Stallings and Kowalski, 1990). By 1980, the portal school terminology was not being used. Third, clinical schools were recommended by the Carnegie Forum and are fashioned after the medical model. Fourth, the Rand study recommended the idea of an induction school. The induction school would be heavily staffed and located in inner city neighborhoods (Stallings and Kowlask, 1990). During the 1980s, the term professional development school became widely used to describe a variety of college-school collaborative efforts. The models vary to accommodate the institutions and students they serve which make it difficult to evaluate and substantiate the value of PDS on the education of future teachers and education reform (Cobb, 2001).

The Holmes Group (1986) report used the nomenclature of professional development school. However, current literature may refer to the professional development school with a variety of terms. The professional development school (PDS) may also be referred to as a

professional development center (PDC), as a partner school, as a professional practice school (PPS), or as a center for professional development and technology (CPDT) (Center for Professional Development, 1995; Clark, 1995; Morrison, 1997). Whatever the nomenclature, the cornerstone of the definition and concept of the professional development school is collaboration between school faculty and university faculty to improve the education of students, teacher candidates, teacher education and administrators (CPDT, 1993; Holmes, 1990; Ishler, 1995).

Collaboration between faculties at the university and the elementary school not just cooperation is essential to growth and success of a professional development school. Stirzaker and Splittergerber (1991) identified three major concerns in the development of the PDS program: (a) commitment of the school district and the university, (b) collaboration and shared decision making, and (c) institutionalization of the PDS program. The second of these, collaboration, in large part determines the resolution of the other two concerns. Hence, it appears that the quality of collaboration is of vital importance. It determines the ability of both schools and universities to accept the values, conflicts, failures, lapses in commitment, and most important, the erratic nature of progress toward the ultimate restructuring goal. Whitford, Schlechty, and Shelor (1987) delineated three types or levels of collaboration: cooperative, symbiotic, and organic. Cooperative collaborations are usually a matter of where one party gives and the other receives, with little reciprocation. Symbiotic collaborations are characterized by reciprocity. The call of the Holmes Group (1986) to invent PDS, however, demands for organic collaboration with a new mix of ideas and practices. The PDS movement requires a major restructuring of two institutions. No part of either remains unscathed (David, 1991). Thus, the quality of collaboration with its unique

ability to synthesize the ideas, the practice, and the emotional investment of a diverse group with diverse goals becomes key to the success of PDS programs. Dixon and Ishler (1992) suggested that collaboration is a messy process fraught with social loafing, miscommunication, and divergent commitments. Collaboration is a necessary element of PDSs and appears to give professional development schools the key to success or might lead to the road of failure (Cooper, 1998; Cowart & Rademacher, 1998).

As pointed out by Bland (1996) "the first year of any effort is always the most tenuous, and is rarely the best indicator of the potential of a new program" (p. 16). Consequently, in an effort to improve collaboration at the two early childhood PDS sites, focus groups were conducted with the elementary teachers who were mentors in the program. All the mentor teachers were invited to attend the focus sessions (3 focus sessions were scheduled for each school). A standard procedure was used for each of the focus group discussions. A faculty member served as the facilitator and the questions for discussion were displayed on an overhead and answers/comments were recorded on the overhead transparencies. Approximately 75 percent of the mentor teachers attended one of the focus groups. The data collected clustered around four common themes: teacher's decision to get involved in PDS, teacher's perceived barriers to success of the PDS, teacher's benefits of the PDS, and recommendations for improvement.

Teachers decided to become involved in the PDS project at their elementary schools for several reasons as illustrated by the following quotes:

"To help someone get into the classroom early"

"Peers said it was helpful."

"Mandated by the principal"

"I needed help."

"Children in my class will have extra mentors that will be interested in what they are doing."

"Part of shaping future teaching"

The participants in the focus groups listed many benefits for students, teachers, teacher candidates, parents, and principals. Examples of benefits of the PDS:

"Help with TAAS"

"To provide one on one opportunities for the children"

"A smaller teacher/pupil ratio"

"There is a positive approach to working out problems"

"We are understanding our roles better. We watch and listen and talk with students [teacher candidates] informally"

"It helps them [teacher candidates] to understand that we are real, and they are real."

"Sharing needs of children"

The mentor teachers named the following barriers that inhibited collaboration and inquiry:

"Lack of information about the extensiveness of the projects"

"Am I giving them [teacher candidates] what they need?"

"TIME"

"Skill level of the PDS student [teacher candidate]"

"Questions related to outline/responsibilities"

Based on the benefits and barriers perceived by the teachers, they were asked to make recommendations for improving the PDS for the following year:

"Remind new mentor teachers of goals and growth of the students [teacher candidates]."

"Students should participate in the playground and lunchtime."

"For evaluation [of teacher candidates], know ahead, give a rubric with some kind of guidelines."

"Clear expectations and a check off list with a time line for university activities"

"Describe boundaries to the student [teacher candidate]"

Overall the teachers stated that the professional development school had met their expectations and they looked forward to participating the following year. Some teachers wanted the teacher candidates to spend more time in their room and some teachers wanted the teacher candidates to spend less time. Conclusions from the focus groups indicated different teachers wanted different things from the teacher candidates, teachers were more positive about the PDS when their reason for being part of the program was to mentor future teachers, and communication was a very important aspect of the partnership.

Just as the success of the PDS for the mentor teachers was dependent on the individual teacher, individual students perceived the benefits and barriers of the PDS differently. During two semesters (and divided between the two schools), 44 teacher candidates participated in class discussion and individual email messages regarding their experiences in the PDS. The teacher candidates were assigned an elementary school in a suburban independent school district and a specific mentor teacher. The teacher candidates spent two days a week at the elementary schools where they also attended their corresponding university course in their PDS classroom. Overall, the teacher candidates

expressed positive comments about their experience in the two elementary schools. They felt they learned a great deal from the real-life experience with students and the mentor teachers. The biggest stress that the teacher candidates seemed to face was the incongruence of expectations of the mentor teacher, principal, and the university faculty. (Specific teacher candidate comments are the subject of another paper.) Wadlington, Slaton, and Partridge (1998) suggested "debriefing at the beginning, middle and end of field experiences" (p. 7) to help alleviate stress for teacher candidates

The professional development school shows the great promise. However, its implementation is full of thorns. This is because it tries to tie up reforms in teacher education with reforms in schools; and because it requires collaboration between schools and universities. It seems that the success of professional development schools is dependent on ongoing dialogue and continuous listening to teacher and teacher candidates' voices. In concluding, the following quotation from Sid W. Richardson Foundation Forum (1991) summarizes the dilemma delineated:

"The Professional Development School is much more than a collection of people in a set of buildings. It entails an attitude, a perspective, a professional predisposition that releases educators to share what they know and to improve the teaching of students and the preparation of educators".

References

Association of Teacher Educators. (1986). Visions of reform: Implications for the education profession. The report of the ATE Blue Ribbon Task Force. J.Sikula (Chair).

Reston, Virginia: Author.

Baker, B. R. (1996). The role of the professional development school to prepare teachers of young children. (Report No. ED394647). ERIC document.

Bland, S. J. & Hecht, J. B. (1996). One year later: Follow-up on a professional development school. (Report No. ED430954). ERIC document.

Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy. (1986). A nation prepared: Teachers for the 21st century. New York: Author.

Center for Professional Development and Technology. (1995). UNT CPDT: Program approval application. Denton, Texas: University of North Texas.

Cobb, J. (2001). The impact of a professional development school on preservice teacher preparation, inservice teachers' professionalism, and children's achievement: Perceptions of inservice teachers. Journal of Teacher Education, 64-74.

Cooper, M. G. (1998). Building a collaborative that will last. Teaching and Change, 6(1), 64-78.

Cowart, M., & Rademacher, J. A. (1998). In my opinion: What students say about professional development schools. Teaching and Change, 6(1), 119-131.

David, J. L. (1991). What it takes to restructure education. Educational leadership, 48(8), 11-15.

Dixon, P.N. & Ishler, R.E. (1992). Professional development schools: Stages in collaboration. Journal of Teacher Education, 43(1), 28-34.

- Goodlad, J. I. (1993). Teachers for our nation's schools. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- Holmes Group. (1990). Tomorrow's schools. Principles for the design of professional schools. East Lansing, MI: Author.
- Holmes Group. (1986). Tomorrow's teachers: A report of the Holmes Group. East Lansing, MI: Author.
- Ishler, R. (1995). Tomorrow's teachers, schools, and schools of education. National Forum, 75, 4-5.
- Marshall, C. S. (1999). Constructing knowledge about teaching and learning in early childhood teacher education because of a partnership. Education(119). [On Line] Available: http://www.elibrary.com/id/192/192/getdoc...ydocid=460332@library_0&dtype=0~&dinst=0
- Morrison, G. (1997). Early childhood professionals: Toward a new identity. Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education, 16(3), 17-19.
- Sid W. Richardson Foundation Forum. (1991). Executive summary: Professional development schools.
- Stallings, J.A., & Kowalski, T. (1990). Research on professional development schools. In W. R. Houston (Ed.), Handbook of research on teacher education. New York: Macmillan.
- Stirzaker, N.A., & Splittergerber, F. (1991). Professional development schools. Unpublished manuscript, University of South Carolina, Columbia.
- Wadlington, E. M., Slaton, E., & Partridge, M. E. (1998). Alleviating stress in pre-service teachers during field experience. Education, (119). [On Line] Available: http://www.elibrary.com/getdoc.cgi?id=145...ydocid=144523@library_1&dtype=0~0&dinst=0

Whitford, B. L., Schlechty, P C., & Shelor, L. G. (1987). Sustaining action research through collaboration: Inquiries for invention. Peabody Journal of Education, 64, 151-169.



U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and
Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center
(ERIC)

ERIC®

Reproduction Release (Specific Document)

I. DOCUMENT IDENTIFICATION:

Title: Professional Development Schools: Listening to Teachers' and Teacher Candidates' Voices	
Author(s): Jennifer E. Aldrich	
Corporate Source: Presented at the ATE Summer Conference; Portland, Oregon	Publication Date: August 8, 2001

II. REPRODUCTION RELEASE:

In order to disseminate as widely as possible timely and significant materials of interest to the educational community, documents announced in the monthly abstract journal of the ERIC system, Resources in Education (RIE), are usually made available to users in microfiche, reproduced paper copy, and electronic media, and sold through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). Credit is given to the source of each document, and, if reproduction release is granted, one of the following notices is affixed to the document.

If permission is granted to reproduce and disseminate the identified document, please CHECK ONE of the following three options and sign in the indicated space following.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 1 documents	The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2A documents	The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2B documents
PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY <hr/> <hr/> TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)	PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE, AND IN ELECTRONIC MEDIA FOR ERIC COLLECTION SUBSCRIBERS ONLY, HAS BEEN GRANTED BY <hr/> <hr/> TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)	PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY <hr/> <hr/> TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
Level 1	Level 2A	Level 2B
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check here for Level 1 release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche or other ERIC archival media (e.g. electronic) and paper copy.	Check here for Level 2A release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche and in electronic media for ERIC archival collection subscribers only	Check here for Level 2B release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche only
Documents will be processed as indicated provided reproduction quality permits. If permission to reproduce is granted, but no box is checked, documents will be processed at Level 1.		

<input type="checkbox"/> dissemination in microfiche or other ERIC archival media (e.g. electronic and paper copy.)	<input type="checkbox"/> and in electronic media for ERIC archival collection subscribers only	<input type="checkbox"/> reproduction and dissemination in microfiche only
Documents will be processed as indicated provided reproduction quality permits. If permission to reproduce is granted, but no box is checked, documents will be processed at Level 1.		

I hereby grant to the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) nonexclusive permission to reproduce and disseminate this document as indicated above. Reproduction from the ERIC microfiche, or electronic media by persons other than ERIC employees and its system contractors requires permission from the copyright holder. Exception is made for non-profit reproduction by libraries and other service agencies to satisfy information needs of educators in response to discrete inquiries.

Signature: 	Printed Name/Position/Title: Dr. Jennifer Aldrich/Assistant Professor	
Organization/Address: Central Missouri State University Lovinger 3300 Warrensburg, MO 64093	Telephone: (660) 543-8657	Fax: (660) 543-4382
	E-mail Address: aldrich@cmsul.cmsu.edu	Date: 10/8/01

III. DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY INFORMATION (FROM NON-ERIC SOURCE):

If permission to reproduce is not granted to ERIC, or, if you wish ERIC to cite the availability of the document from another source, please provide the following information regarding the availability of the document. (ERIC will not announce a document unless it is publicly available, and a dependable source can be specified. Contributors should also be aware that ERIC selection criteria are significantly more stringent for documents that cannot be made available through EDRS.)

Publisher/Distributor:
Address:
Price:

IV. REFERRAL OF ERIC TO COPYRIGHT/REPRODUCTION RIGHTS HOLDER:

If the right to grant this reproduction release is held by someone other than the addressee, please provide the appropriate name and address:

Name:
